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The Army's EO Program and Policies



Lesson 11: Perception Process and Stereotypes

Overview

- The Perception Process
- Attributes to Perception
- Economizing Phenomenon
- Characteristics of Stereotypes
- Sources of Stereotypes
- Strategies to Correct Inaccurate Perceptions



Introduction

- During this period we will be discussing perceptions and the perception process. Sometimes what we see or hear is not necessarily what we actually see or hear.
- It is important as an EOR you not form opinions of others or groups based on your past experiences, whether they were good or bad experiences.
- When gathering information for your commander, ensure you deal with facts, not opinions, and make sure your facts are accurate.



Perception

- **Perception** - defined as the procedures by which
we try and interpret information about the environment that surrounds us.



The Perception Process

- The perception process is the procedure by which we try to gather and interpret information about the environment that surrounds us.
- Our perceptions explain reality from an individual point of view.
- Webster defines perception as an "awareness of the elements of our environment through physical sensations;" sight, touch, hearing, smelling, and taste.



The Perception Process

- Our perceptions reinforce or enhance our socialization and also defines our interactions with others who are different or similar to ourselves.
- Another important aspect of perception is that the process of physical interpretation and our capacity to comprehend new information is based on our past experiences.
 - Feedback about ourselves and others
 - Not always based on true picture of reality
 - We behave as though our perceptions are real



Attributes for Perception

- There are three attributes or elements to our perception process.
 - **Raw Data** - the information we experience (the picture).
 - **Mental Process** - is unseen but affected by things as individual perceptions, e.g., race, color, religion, gender, or other past cultural experiences (where have we seen this before?).
 - **The End Product** - Our perception, sensing, or interpretation of our experience.
 - When raw data is incomplete or insufficient, the brain automatically fills in the missing pieces and locks-in on past experiences (the perception).



Economizing Phenomenon

- First Impression
- Self-Fulfilling Prophecy
- Just Like Me
- Blaming the Victim
- Halo Effect



Economizing Phenomenon

- Economizing Phenomenon is the mind's ability to take in new information, combine it with old information, and formulate new ideas through quick deduction.
- This is sort of a “quick fix” that occurs when we don't have time to fully analyze the new information.
- When you hear the word “fire,” you don't sit and wonder where it is, where the smoke is coming from, or is the fire alarm working.
- Instead you run outside.



Economizing Phenomenon

- **First Impression** - During this situation we make a major decision or judgment call based on our first encounter with an individual, group, or event.
 - We learn from an early age about how important it is to make a good first impression and apply this philosophy on a daily basis.
 - We also understand the consequences of a wrong "first impression."
 - We are reminded as we hear people comment that "he or she was not what I expected" or "that wasn't as bad as I thought it would be."



Economizing Phenomenon

- **Self-Fulfilling Prophecy** - occurs when an individual or group has a high expectation that someone will succeed or fail in a given situation based on his or her perceptions.
 - This can also be applied to things and events.
 - The concept is normally characterized by prejudgments and biases.
 - The prophecy is fulfilling-filled by the conscious or unconscious actions of participants and, or spectators, leading to the expected outcome.
 - Self-fulfilling prophecy is a complex, complicated process, but at an early age we could understand both negative and positive results when the right forces are put into motion.



Economizing Phenomenon

- **Just-Like-Me** - This is another form of the perceptual shortcut in which people see themselves or others as being constant or consistent.
 - With this assumption we need not take a lot of time to get to know others or ourselves.
 - An excuse that is often heard is "isn't that just like me" or "isn't that just like them", or "people will never change."



Economizing Phenomenon

- **Blaming The Victim** - involves seeing individuals or groups as the origin or cause of a particular action or problem rather than the circumstances or other relevant factors in a given situation.
 - Examples of this concept are prevalent throughout our history and are just as relevant in our society today.
 - “He or she is an alcoholic because of low moral character;
 - Homeless people wouldn't be homeless if they wanted to work
 - Sociologists believe that this behavior is also part of our ego defense mechanism which protects us from feelings of guilt or uncontrolled remorse.



Economizing Phenomenon

- **Halo Effect** - according to this effect, if we know something good about a person, we are likely to perceive him/her as having other good characteristics.
- But, if we know something unfavorable, we are likely to see other unfavorable things.



Economizing Phenomenon

- Our perceptions are also influenced by biological and sociological culture factors. Some examples of these factors are:
 - Biological factors that affect the perception process are: sight, touch, taste, hearing and smell.
 - Sociological culture factors include: Social norms, customary behaviors, language and symbols.
 - Some additional sociological cultural factors include: Ethnocentrism (believing one group is better than another or superior), proxemics (close, or distance from a person), color consciousness, values, beliefs, and attitudes



Stereotypes

- **Stereotypes** - whether favorable or unfavorable is an exaggerated belief associated with a category.
- Its function is to justify our conduct in relation to that category. We all have stereotypes.
- Once you have them, they are yours for life.
- There are soldiers and leaders in the Army that stereotype individuals into a category. An example of stereotypes may be: “Women are not good drivers” or “White men can’t play basketball”



Characteristics of Stereotypes

- **Fixed rigid ideas** - An example may be all minorities are not educated, lazy, and poor.
- **Associated with a group or category of people**
 - This is based on outward features such as skin color.
- **Not supported by evidence** - For example the supply sergeant at my last unit was crooked.
 - Does this mean all supply sergeants are crooked?
 - No, not all supply sergeant are crooked



Characteristics of Stereotypes

- **Can be favorable or unfavorable** - An example is a stereotype that all Asians are polite and intelligent, therefore I'll get along well with them.
- **Driven by motive** - An example of this is say moving out of a neighborhood which suddenly becomes integrated, because the value of my property will decline



Characteristics of Stereotypes

- People respond to information that is important to them, categorize that information, generate expectations, guide their behavior based on the expectation, and assign characteristics to the categories.
- This leads to the “in-group” (most like me) and the “out-group” (most different from me). The people we tend to categorize or stereotype most are the out-group.



Sources of Stereotypes

- The most common of these sources are:
 - Socialization Process
 - Books
 - Mass Media
 - Educators and Public Officials



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Strategies to Correct Inaccurate Perceptions

- Acceptance of differences in people
- Active Listening
- Provide Feedback
- Own your Behaviors/Feelings
- Use Inclusionary Language
- Avoid Stereotypes



Strategies to Correct Inaccurate Perceptions

- **Acceptance of differences in people** - disagreement is okay.
 - But rather than use statements such as “you’re wrong” or “that’s your perception,” try using, “I differ.”
 - Don’t deny the other person’s experiences. Look at people objectively.
- **Active Listening** - listen for understanding, not agreement.
- **Provide Feedback** - be behavior specific.
 - Let others know what impact their behavior has on you.
 - Always address the behavior and not the individual.



Strategies to Correct Inaccurate Perceptions

- **Own your Behaviors/Feelings** - share with the group where you are, and be willing to explore how you got there.
- **Receive feedback** - don't defend or rationalize your behavior. Accept what others have to say.
- **Use Inclusionary Language** - if its your feeling or behavior, take ownership by saying "I" versus "we" or "they."
- **Avoid Stereotypes** - work to learn not to stereotype



Conclusion

- During this block of instruction, we have discussed the perception process.
- As stated earlier, the perception process is the action of making sense out of experience, of giving meaning to experience.
- How do we do that?
- Never assume, deal with facts, never exclude anyone, and remember that we are all different, with different values, beliefs and socialization, so do not expect others to fulfill our expectations based on our own stereotypes



Quote by Author Dennis Kimbro

“One of the most important aspects of achievement is training the eyes to see properly. Sight is an interesting phenomenon. We see things not as they are, but as we are. Our perception is shaped by past experiences, according to faith and consciousness.” In other words, seeing is not believing. Believing is seeing. We can only see in others what lies within ourselves.

